

DISPLAYS

FAQ

Q Can you tell me how to use my monitor in Portrait mode, so that I can read documents more easily?

A First, you need a monitor that can be rotated, such as the two monitors reviewed here this month. This doesn't guarantee the picture adjusts itself, though. If you don't want to be looking at your computer's desktop side-on, you'll need the right software as well.

Asus and Samsung have included a pivot utility with their monitors, but not all manufacturers do. Third-party pivot software is available to buy, but if you have an ATI or nVidia-based graphics card, you can use the rotate feature in the graphics card driver.

Right-click on any clear area on the desktop and select Properties. Go to the Settings tab and click on Advanced. If your card has an ATI graphics processor, you should see a tab called Rotation. With nVidia, you need to click on the tab for the graphics processor. A box will appear to the side of the Properties dialog box. Click on NVRotate.

Lynley Oram

Features Editor and displays expert

lynley@computershopper.co.uk

ASUS PW191

★★★★★

£296 inc VAT

A widescreen monitor such as Asus's 19" PW191 is well suited for watching movies. With its high native resolution of 1,440x900, it's also great for viewing two documents side by side or working on spreadsheets. The PW191 can also pivot, turning it from landscape to portrait mode, which makes working on Word documents feel more natural. Asus supplies a utility that gives you a button on your desktop. Click it and it will rotate your desktop for you.

As well as being practical, the PW191 is a well-designed monitor. The shiny black front and silver stand are attractive. There are no protruding buttons to ruin the screen's smooth lines, as Asus has used flush touch-operated buttons to operate the onscreen display and power. You activate a control by pressing your finger against a control's icon. However, this can be a pain when you're re-positioning the monitor, as the buttons are located in the bottom right-hand corner, which is where you grab to pivot the screen.

There are VGA and DVI inputs and we ran our tests through both. The PW191's picture quality is fine and similar to ViewSonic's VA1912W (see 'Also consider...' below), but there is a noticeable improvement when using a digital connection. You will want to sit right in front of the screen, though, as the tight viewing angles mean you lose colour accuracy when moving from side to side. We saw a purple tinge to the screen when testing via the analogue connection but using DVI reduced this effect significantly. This monitor also did slightly better in the greyscale test than ViewSonic's



VA1912w, although there was banding in the darker greys. But in general use, you're unlikely to notice these small deficiencies. We'd recommend a more expensive and better-quality monitor for those interested in photo editing, though.

Asus offers its Zero Bright Dot warranty with this monitor, and will replace any monitor with a single defective pixel that stays on all the time.

However, the company will not replace monitors with dead pixels that stay off all the time. As always-on pixels are more noticeable than always-off pixels, this is still a good offer.

If you are looking for a monitor with a pivot feature, the PW191 is a great buy. Otherwise, the ViewSonic VA1912w, which is over £70 cheaper, is better value.

Lynley Oram

SUMMARY

- ✓ Pivot screen and utility
- ✓ Zero dead-pixel warranty
- ✗ Poor viewing angles

WIDESCREEN MONITOR 19"
widescreen LCD, 1,440x900 resolution, 8ms response time, 600:1 contrast ratio, D-sub and DVI
PART CODE PW191
SUPPLIER www.scan.co.uk
DETAILS www.asus.com

Also consider...

AOC LM2028

★★★★★

£410 inc VAT

BEST BUY AOC's LM2028 is cheaper than many 19" screens, but its 20.1" panel doesn't just give more display space, it provides a higher resolution of 1,600x1,200, too. It also produces a decent image, although whites aren't quite as true as we would have liked. Unless you need perfect colour accuracy, though, it's a bargain.



20.1" LCD 1,600x1,200 native resolution, D-sub, DVI PART CODE TFT2090PS+
SUPPLIER www.eclipsecomputers.co.uk
DETAILS www.aocmonitor.com ✓ Decent image at a great price ✗ Minimal vertical adjustment FULL REVIEW Dec 2005

SAMSUNG LE26R51BD

★★★★★

£650 inc VAT

BEST BUY Samsung's 26" HD TV possesses stunning good looks and oozes quality. It receives digital and analogue TV stations, so there's no need to use a Freeview box. Video inputs look amazing through this set, giving sharp and vibrant images. This model also has support for HD video, making it remarkable value for money.



26" LCD TV 1,360x768 resolution, HD Ready, one HDMI, one VGA, two SCART, one component, one S-video, headphone PART CODE LE26R51BD SUPPLIER www.dixons.co.uk
DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk ✓ Great picture ✗ Speakers lack bass FULL REVIEW Feb 2006

VIEWSONIC VA1912w

★★★★★

£223 inc VAT

BEST BUY ViewSonic's 19" widescreen VA1912w's high 1,440x900 resolution provides plenty of room to work, while the widescreen aspect is perfect for playing games. There's a choice of digital and analogue inputs. Picture quality is decent, although the harsh banding in our greyscale test means it isn't ideal for photo editing. Still, at this price it's an absolute bargain and an excellent choice for anyone that wants a large screen.



19" WIDESCREEN LCD 1,440x900 resolution, 8ms response time, 500:1 contrast ratio, DVI and D-sub inputs PART CODE VA1912w
SUPPLIER www.morecomputers.co.uk
DETAILS www.viewsonic.co.uk ✓ Analogue and digital inputs ✗ Viewing angles could be better FULL REVIEW Apr 2006

SAMSUNG SyncMaster 770p

★★★★★

£265 inc VAT

Samsung's SyncMaster 770p isn't your run-of-the-mill 17" LCD monitor. It has a triple-hinged stem to tilt, pivot and rotate the monitor with ease. The stem also makes it easy to move the screen up and down, from just off the desk to a maximum height of 17cm. The screen can be folded right back so it is flat against the base, making it easy to transport. Pivot software is included with the monitor, and this detects when the monitor's screen has been adjusted and rotates your desktop for you accordingly.

The viewing angles on this monitor are good. Moving to the side doesn't result in any loss of colour accuracy. You have to move more than one person's width away from the centre of the monitor's screen to experience any noticeable loss of brightness.

The 770p has a high 1,500:1 contrast ratio, and it showed in our image-quality test. Our greyscale test did not pose the same difficulties for the 770p as for other monitors we've tested. There was some slight banding, but only in the dark-to-light grey areas. Whites were very bright, though, and blacks were dark and smooth. The monitor produced vibrant, rich colours in our High Definition (HD) video clip, with crisp, sharp details. This monitor has a 6ms response time, which won't make much difference to most office tasks, but will mean less ghosting in fast-moving images, such as games and movies.

Strangely, the power and monitor cable connections aren't in the monitor, but are housed in



a box attached to the monitor like a little tail. This contains just the one video connector, DVI, but it is possible to connect to an analogue output using an adaptor. All the monitor's controls, such as brightness and colour temperature, are operated through software that's installed on the computer, rather than through buttons on the screen as is normally the case. It works well, but makes it difficult to make adjustments if you're not in Windows or you are playing a game.

The 770p produces excellent images, and the contrast is superb. The triple-hinged stem makes it remarkably easy to adjust the positioning and, while it is odd to have the connections in a box, it isn't a problem. If you don't need the extra space afforded by a 19" monitor and you can afford it, this LCD monitor is fabulous.

Lynley Oram

SUMMARY

- ✓ Excellent contrast
- ✓ Superb picture quality
- ✗ Controls via software only

LCD MONITOR 17" LCD, 1,280x1,024 resolution, 6ms response time, 1,500:1 contrast ratio, DVI
PART CODE LS17VDPXH/Q/XSA
SUPPLIER www.overclockers.co.uk
DETAILS www.samsung.com/uk

CHOOSING AN... LCD Monitor

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

IMAGE SIZE: 17"

NATIVE RESOLUTION: 1,280x1,024

INPUTS: VGA

EXTRAS:

Recommended minimum in grey

1 LCD screens (also known as TFTs) offer a range of benefits over conventional CRT displays, including compact designs and sharp, straight-sided images. However, LCD technology also has its disadvantages. Image quality can deteriorate at acute viewing angles, while the picture can appear fuzzy at resolutions below the native one. LCDs sometimes suffer from defective or 'dead' pixels and may produce distortions when displaying finely textured patterns.

2 A basic 17" LCD monitor (one with the specification shown in grey above) costs from £135, although screens with higher viewing angles, better response times and higher contrast ratios can cost as much as £300 – these models avoid the pitfalls mentioned above, though.

3 All 17" LCD screens have a native resolution of 1,280x1,024 pixels, which is fine for most applications. If you want a larger viewing area – useful for creative software – a 19" LCD is necessary. These have the same native resolution and start at around £200. You'll need to spend £400 to get a 20" model with a 1,600x1,200 resolution. For entertainment, you'll prefer a widescreen monitor; 17" models start at around £200.

4 A video graphics array (VGA) input means the display will work with any PC, but a digital video interface (DVI) input removes unnecessary digital-to-analogue conversion of the picture, potentially improving sharpness and colour accuracy while eliminating interference. A digital connection also automatically adjusts the picture perfectly; with an analogue connection you may have to use the auto adjust controls and fine-tune some settings to get a good picture. A DVI-equipped graphics card is required for a digital input, but the vast majority of graphics cards have one.

5 Extras may include a USB hub, speakers, a microphone and even a TV tuner, which allows the display to double as a standalone TV.

ACER AL1751

★★★★★

£188 inc VAT



Its reflective coating makes the AL1751 display dark, rich blacks and vibrant colours. It passed all our image tests easily, and is one of the best-quality monitors we've reviewed. It has DVI and D-sub inputs, and copes well with both. With its 8ms response time it's ideal for gamers, but at this price it's a great buy for anyone.



17" LCD 1,280x1,024 resolution, 8ms response time, 500:1 contrast ratio, stereo speakers, DVI and D-sub inputs PART CODE ET.L4008.011
SUPPLIER <http://uk.insight.com> DETAILS www.acer.co.uk ✓ Good picture ✗ Poor-quality speakers FULL REVIEW Feb 2006

BELINEA 10 19 25

★★★★★

£211 inc VAT



Belinea's 10 19 25 might be fairly ugly, but it has several redeeming features, including excellent image quality. Colours are balanced and clean with an even backlight. Detail is maintained in dark areas, although skin tones lack warmth.

If you want a decent 19" LCD that doesn't cost a fortune, this is an excellent buy.



19" LCD 1,280x1,024 native resolution, D-sub, DVI, speakers, three-port USB hub PART CODE 10 19 25 SUPPLIER www.247av.com DETAILS www.belinea.co.uk ✓ Great quality ✗ Unattractive FULL REVIEW Dec 2005

SAMSUNG LE32R41BD

★★★★★

£833 inc VAT



The LE32R41BD is a gorgeous TV with image quality to match. It supports analogue and digital TV, and is incredibly easy to set up. It has a large range of inputs, so you can connect any device to it. Picture quality was excellent across the board, with HD video looking particularly good. It's great value for the size of the screen.



32" LCD TV 1,360x768 resolution, HD Ready, one HDMI, one VGA, two SCART, one component, one S-video, one composite headphone PART CODE LE32E41BD SUPPLIER www.empiredirect.co.uk DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk ✓ Fabulous quality and menu system FULL REVIEW Feb 2006